Emergency Support Services Program

EMERGENCY SUPPORT SERVICES

People Helping People

Updated Sept 2025

Message from the Fire Chief

Thank you for your interest in becoming an ESS volunteer for the New Westminster Emergency Management Program.

The New Westminster Emergency Management Program is committed to recruit talented and motivated individuals who possess a high level of integrity to serve our community. We are also committed to provide a service that is reflective of our diverse community.

Our citizens place their trust in the New Westminster Emergency Management Program and it is important that our volunteers have a strong commitment to professionalism.



Sincerely,

Erin Williams, Fire Chief

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What is ESS

Emergency Support Services (ESS) provides short-term, basic support to the residents of the City of New Westminster, who have been impacted by an emergency or a disaster. The goal of ESS is to help people begin to re-establish themselves as quickly as possible after either of these events.

Who are ESS Volunteers?

The City of New Westminster ESS volunteers are a group of dedicated individuals who help plan for the well-being of their neighbours, and fellow citizens, in the event of a disaster. A commitment of approximately four to six hours per month is required for meetings, free training and exercises. More hours may be required during larger emergencies or disasters. Volunteers are required to:

- Be in good health
- Have a valid BC Driver's Licence
- Complete the City of New Westminster's Volunteer Application Process
- Provide Successful Criminal Record Check Results

What do ESS Volunteers do?

ESS volunteers help people and pets who have had to evacuate their homes during emergencies or disasters like fires, floods, or earthquakes. ESS volunteers assist at disaster sites and facilitate the provision of essential, basic needs for evacuees.

There are monthly meetings and training sessions for all volunteers so they have the skills to:

- Act as a liaison between the evacuees and the first responders
- Provide assistance to evacuees in accessing services and finding a safe place where they can gather to receive assistance and information
- Coordinate the provision of primary services including temporary lodging, food, clothing and incidentals (toothbrush, diapers etc.). Specialized services may also be supplied as required; these services include emotional support, health services (First Aid), pet care, and transportation, as required
- Identify locations and facilities to house and feed larger groups of people forced to evacuate from their homes
- Provide emergency preparedness education to the public and community organizations

ESS Response Activation Levels

Level 1 (small event)	Level 2 (moderate event)	Level 3 (large or complex event)
An incident involving one or two families Services are provided at the incident site	An incident involving three to ten families Services are delivered either on site or in a Reception Centre	Involves a larger number of evacuees with increased complexities The number of Reception Centres and/or Group Lodging sites that are activated increase as needed
e.g. House fire	e.g. Apartment fire, explosion	e.g. Chemical spill requiring evacuation of a neighbourhood e.g. Major flooding, interface fire, earthquakes

Note: Level 1 activations occur several times per year. Level 2 and 3 activations are less frequent.

Reports To / Receives Support From

Emergency Support Services Volunteers report to the Emergency Support Services Director or Designate.

Benefits to Volunteering

- Prepares you to cope in an emergency
- Builds transferable skills such as empathy, effective listening, organization, and utilizes skills already possessed
- Offers training opportunities
- Meeting new people with similar interests
- Enjoyment in giving back to your community
- Helping in a time of need
- Volunteer hours are acknowledged in a letter of reference (if requested)

Minimum Qualifications Required

- Must have a valid BC Driver's Licence
- Must live in close proximity to the City of New Westminster
- Must complete City of New Westminster ESS training, as outlined

Training

New Westminster ESS Volunteers are required to complete the following Justice Institute of British Columbia courses:

- Introduction to ESS – JIBC EMRG 1600
- Level 1 ESS (online) – JIBC EMRG 1607
- Introduction to Reception Centre's (online) – JIBC EMRG 1610
- Introduction to Group Lodging – JIBC EMRG 1612

- Introduction to Evacuee Registration and Supports JIBC EMRG 1635

Note: Each of the courses listed above require a 2 - 7.5 hour time commitment to complete and are offered free of charge.

Reception Centre Training

The Justice Institute of British Columbia's (JIBC) course *Introduction to Reception Centres* prepares ESS volunteers to work in facilities designated as Reception Centres. Course topics include:

- Reception Centre services
- Roles and responsibilities in Reception Centres
- Reception Centre set-up
- Worker care planning

For more information about emergency support services training, please see the JIBC's Emergency Support Services web pages: www.jibc.ca/areas-of-study/emergency-management/emergency-support-services-ess

What is a Reception Centre

People who are forced to evacuate their homes in an emergency may be directed to a Reception Centre. A Reception Centre is a safe place where people can go to receive:

- Information about the emergency
- Assistance meeting their basic needs
- Help planning their recovery from the disaster

Reception Centres are often located in community centres, recreation centres, churches and schools. Depending on what is available in the community, tents can also be erected and used as a Centre.

Whether or not a Reception Centre is opened depends on many factors, including the size of the emergency and the number of volunteers or facilities available. Your local ESS Director or Emergency Program Coordinator will decide when and where to open a Reception Centre.

Mock Exercise

A practice exercise will take place once a year. During these mock exercises we activate current response plans to note strengths and address any areas of improvement. Attendance at these sessions is **strongly** encouraged as a team evaluation works best if everyone is there.

What is the time commitment for New Westminster ESS Volunteers?

Emergency Support Services (ESS) work is often described as “hurry up and wait.”

As a disaster and/or emergency incident is unpredictable, we ensure we are ready through training and practicing the skills required for an emergency response.

Minimum 20 hours. The New Westminster Emergency Support Services program is committed to providing you with opportunities to practice, learn, and train throughout the year. **Monthly training modules are mandatory, and if not completed, will result in termination from the current team.**

Monthly Team Meetings

Monthly meetings take place on the **first Wednesday @ 7 pm**. Please make every effort to attend these meetings. We are aware that lives are busy and volunteer work is something that requires our flexibility as well. We completely understand if you are not able to attend a meeting for some reason, **but it is a requirement to complete the missed training prior to renewing your commitment each year.**

ESS Callouts

ESS callouts are sporadic and can happen day or night. Therefore, all ESS volunteer positions are on-call. ESS Volunteers need to live within the community and are required to report for duty in the event of an emergency when on the schedule.

ESS Level 1 Responders

Once ESS Volunteers complete their Level 1 training, new Level 1 responders will shadow an experienced ESS Volunteer for their first few call-outs. The objective is to watch the procedures on your first call, participate in the second, and then hopefully become part of the team lead rotation after that. When you feel comfortable, we will likely give you the opportunity to act as Team Lead for a shift and put all of your training into action!

Community Outreach

We also have opportunities to provide information to the public on emergency preparedness and ESS.

- Information booths will be set-up at various community events and festivals throughout the year.
- Speak to different groups within our community about emergency preparedness.

If public speaking and outreach interests you, join us as we deliver valuable tips on family preparedness within our community.

Personal Preparedness

We recommend being prepared to take care of yourself and your family for a minimum of 72 hours. This will help you to find a comfort level that will help you take care of yourself and your loved ones during an emergency, and allow you to respond sooner.

We strive to promote emergency preparedness and would like all our team members to practice that as well. For more information, visit: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/preparedbc/guides-and-resources

We hope that you now have a better understanding of the opportunities that come with being a City of New Westminster ESS team member. If you have any questions, call the program and we will be happy to offer any further information that you require.

The following website is a great resource to learn more about emergency management in our province: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/emergency-management-and-climate-readiness

Application Process

The application process for the City of New Westminster's ESS Volunteer Program has been broken down into five (5) different stages:

- Stage 1 – City of New Westminster (CNW) - Better Impact Application Form
- Stage 2 – Interview with CNW Coordinator
- Stage 3 – Reference Checks
- Stage 4 – Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Search
- Stage 5 – Interview with ESS Coordinator

All applicants will be notified during the process if they will be moving on to the next stage via email. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure email addresses are valid and updated, and that email filters is set up to accept emails from the City. It is the candidate's responsibility to check emails on a regular basis.

The Application Form

The application form is located on the City of New Westminster's Volunteering page:

https://app.betterimpact.com/PublicOrganization/e24e1756-a3cc-4c46-baad-e190c435e0d0/Gvi/ee9ef69f-c756-479a-a7c6-c5dc3fe7dc12/1

Click where indicated to apply, review each section thoroughly and complete your sign up for the MyImpactPage.com log in, if you do not have it already. It is your responsibility to understand the application and to provide all the requested information. You are responsible for the accuracy of all statements.

City of New Westminster Respectful Workplace Policy and Human Rights Policy

All **successful** applicants are to **familiarize** themselves with the City of New Westminster's Respectful Workplace and Human Rights Policy. A copy will be provided.

The Interviews

The intent of the personal interviews are to allow us to learn more about you, your experiences, and your abilities from your perspective. It is also an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you are suitable for the position and to let you know of all the volunteering opportunities within the City of New Westminster.

Police Information Check with Vulnerable Sector

The nature of our business **requires** each candidate to complete the Criminal Record and the Vulnerable Sector Check.

Application for the Police Information Check and the Vulnerable Sector Check will only be made after successfully completing previous stages of the recruitment. You will be given the instructions following your initial interview. Please bring two pieces of ID at the time of your interview.

The Police Information and Vulnerable Sector Check response will be documented and retained on your Better Impact volunteer file.

Reference Checks

We use a number of tools throughout our assessment processes to validate your information and to capture a clear representation of your history. At this reference check stage of the application process, we substantiate this information through your references.

Thank you for your interest

in

The City of New Westminster's Emergency Management Program

and

Emergency Support Service